

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR YVONNE B. BURKE

May 16, 2006

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has identified improved safety, permanency and a reduced reliance on detention as its primary service delivery goals for the children and families of Los Angeles County. The consistent and timely delivery of expert health and mental health care to children countywide supports improvements in all three areas. Through a partnership between DCFS and the Departments of Health Services (DHS) and Mental Health (DMH), Medical Hubs have been established throughout the County to consistently provide a standard level of services to children placed in out-of-home care as a result of substantiated child abuse and/or neglect. These services include an initial medical examination and mental health screening and an expert forensic examination, whenever necessary. By July 1, 2006, it is projected that Medical Hubs will become fully operational countywide.

The long-term plan for Medical Hubs is to also provide expert forensic examinations to children suspected to be victims of child abuse and/or neglect who are not yet removed from their homes. In these cases, the results of an expert child abuse/neglect examination would factor into DCFS' determination of whether a child's safety warrants removal. In addition, Hub services will expand to children who have been injured while under DCFS' care; children whose care requires a second opinion;

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and children whose ongoing health care needs warrant the expertise of Hub professionals until referred to community providers.

An automated interagency data system to track each child as he/she moves through the L.A. County child welfare system is fundamental to the efficient exchange of vital information between DCFS, DHS, DMH and Medical Hubs while serving a child. The Hubs can immediately access the child's insurance coverage, such as Medi-Cal, which will inform the Hubs of the appropriate billing source to cover the cost of Hub services and provide a history of services previously rendered to the child. DCFS can immediately receive the results of Hub services, which will expedite the required Hub-identified follow up as well as update each child's Health and Education Passport. The data will also facilitate DCFS' measurement of the impacts of countywide Medical Hub services upon its three outcome goals.

Although the benefits of an automated interagency data system to support the countywide Medical Hubs are evident, clearly, the implementation requires consideration, research and discussion by and between DHS, DCFS, DMH, County Counsel and the Chief Information Office (CIO). Nevertheless, any enhancement that will support consistent and expert health and mental health care service delivery to abused and neglected children is absolutely essential.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: Instruct the CIO, in conjunction with DHS, CAO, DCFS, DMH and County Counsel to report back in 30 days on the feasibility of a cost-effective automated data system that will provide for the tracking of DCFS-supervised children served by the countywide Medical Hubs, and include in the analysis the status of the medical passport.

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